GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3079
ANSWERED ON:16.03.2016
Permanent Solution to Fishermen Issue
Ashok Kumar Shri K.;Kataria Shri Rattan Lal;Vanaroja Smt. R.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any understanding has been reached between India and Sri Lanka to find a permanent/time-bound solution to the fishermen issue;

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the deliberations held during the visits of various dignitaries of both the countries;

(c) whether the issue of Katchatheevu and early implementation of the 13th Amendment is full also came up for talks during these visits;

(d) if so, the details in this regard; and

(e) the details of constructive steps taken by the Government for early resolution of the fishermen issue?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) & (d) The matter relating to the Katchatheevu Island is currently sub-judice in the Supreme Court of India. Indian fishermen have been participating on an annual basis at the St. Anthony's festival celebrated on the Katchatheevu Island. This year, according to available information, 3251 Indians attended the St. Anthony's festival from February 20-21, 2016. India has been engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka at the highest levels on its stated commitment to implement the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution and to go beyond, so as to achieve meaningful devolution of powers and national reconciliation.

(e) Government attaches the highest importance to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. As soon as reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan authorities are received, Government, through diplomatic channels, immediately takes up the matter with Government of Sri Lanka to secure their early release and repatriation along with their vessels. The number of fishermen apprehended by Sri Lankan Navy in 2012 was 197, in 2013 it was 676, in 2014 it was 787 and in 2015 was 454. Due to efforts made, all these fishermen were released and repatriated. Currently, 96 Indian fishermen and 90 vessels are in Sri Lankan custody; India has 9 Sri Lankan fishermen and 13 boats in its custody.